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ANNUAL REPORT

1931

GENERAL GRANT NATIONAL PARK

John R. White, Superintendent (Acting)
Guy Hopping, Assistant Superintendent, In Charge,
General Grant National Park, California.

GENERAL

Continued improvement in general conditions and means of operation have characterized the year in this park, with increased protection to visitors and natural features alike, due to a slight increase in temporary ranger personnel. Oiling and widening of county approach roads have contributed to the comfort and safety of visitors. Within the park, limited funds provided for road betterments have permitted great improvements, chiefly widening and light oiling of the heavily travelled Rocking Rock Road. Owing to continued dry weather of increasing duration and excessive heat each season, still another deep spring was developed to care for increased demands of next year, and to offset possible continued decrease in flow of underground waters.

Opening of old roads and trails, long neglected and overgrown with brush, was continued, mainly as a means of fire protection, but assisting also in enlarging the trail system of the park.

Firebreaks protecting three sides of the park are now upon a maintenance basis, although additions to this system are still needed. Improvements in camping facilities include community fireplaces at the two picnic grounds, a material increase in the numbers of camp tables with cupboards attached; and fireplaces for individual campsites. New comfort stations at the Grant Grove of Big Trees and at Cedar Springs Campground meet present needs in this line. Heavy road equipment acquired this season has made possible economical and effective work upon the highways of the park, and will permit necessary snow removal from the main arteries.

Work upon the Generals' Highway through the park is now under full headway, with good progress being made. The cooperative construction of service road and fire lookout tower upon Grant Park Ridge, completed last year, is having results the present season when these effective means of locating fires are in operation for the first time. Signs have been placed at points needing these safeguards, and where needed for the information of visitors. Insect control work, inaugurated this year, has been effective as far as limited funds permitted. The danger, however, is still great, a special report showing serious infestation spreading into the park from badly affected areas adjoining upon the north and west.

WEATHER

The winter months were characterized by exceedingly light snowfall. The total for the season was but 86 inches, as compared with 152.5 inches last year, which also was far below normal. Though the snowfall was much lighter, the heavy water content and late spring rains brought the precipitation to 29.09 inches, as against 27.53 inches for last year.

Cold, rainy weather in June, showed its effect on June travel. The summer months were characterized by extremely high temperatures. The highest maximum since weather instruments were installed here was recorded on July 26, when the mercury reached 91 degrees.

TRAVEL

A total of 51,995 visitors in 16,245 cars is of record in Grant Park for the season closing September 30, 1931. Winter travel was not encouraged, owing to the necessity of delegating winter road maintenance to State crews obliged to keep the road open through the park. However, the extremely open winter, some development of winter sports, and unusually fine, spring-like weather in May, account in a measure for the large increase in travel, amounting on May 31 to 57.2% over the corresponding period of last year.

The increase for the travel season as a whole amounts to 17.1%, as compared with a loss of 2.7% last year. Actual travel into the park would undoubtedly show considerably larger totals were it possible to obtain an accurate check of visitors reaching the Big Tree groves, Park Ridge and other sections possible of access without passing Headquarters, where a lone ranger attempts to handle the entire situation during most of the year.

Totals of 1,369 cars and 4,412 campers for the season are recorded in developed campgrounds of the park, showing an increase of 65.5% over last year. An increase of 37.5% in campers was shown during the peak of the season, when abnormal temperatures prevailed in the San Joaquin Valley.

Both travel and camping figures were badly affected by two serious forest fires near the park, that covering the period of the 4th of July holidays over the week-end causing a heavy slump in travel. The heavy pall of smoke, with falling ashes throughout the park, caused an exodus which stemmed, as well, the tide of incoming visitors, although no real danger existed in the park. Out of state travel for the season was 453 cars carrying 1,483 people, representing 34 states and territories, and one foreign country.

BUILDINGS

New construction - A small unit of shake roof and siding cabins was built to accommodate the large crew on road work. New comfort stations, equipped with showers, at Grant Grove and Cedar Springs Camp were built in accordance with plans of the Landscape Division.

PROTECTION

The addition of a patrol ranger, temporary, to the summer protection force has been of inestimable value this season, with marked decrease in vandalism and abuse of campground facilities.

No fires were reported within the park this season, due to a campaign of instruction and warning. Park crews, however, have been sent to fires in adjoining areas to cooperate with Forest Service or State forces as seemed advisable on occasion.

NATURALIST AND MUSEUM SERVICE

This activity has been conducted entirely under the direction of Ranger Naturalist Basil E. Jamison. Marked and satisfactory progress has been made.

THE NATION'S CHRISTMAS TREE

The sixth annual celebration at noon of Christmas Day, at the foot of the General Grant Tree, brought an attendance of approximately 400 people. Program and arrangements were well handled, and roads in good condition. Road maintenance equipment now available in the park will in future assure easy access by visitors to this increasingly important ceremony.

PARK ROADS

A distance of 2.6 miles, covering the Rocking Rock Road and the loop bordering the meadow opposite Grant Park Lodge, was oiled this year. The Sequoia Lake Road was improved on sharp turns. The Rocking Rock Road was widened and, although needing further widening at a few points, a control is no longer required.

PARK TRAILS

All of the 13 miles of old trails are now open to travel after years of neglect. New construction included 1.4 miles of 3 to 4 foot trail, of which .9 mile was built this year; 900' of 4' pathway and 150' of narrow winding trail through the wreckage of the fallen Michigan Tree, also constructed this season. Of the long-neglected main trails, 3 miles have been cleared and roughly regraded. One-half mile of wide old trail cleared as a portion of firebreak may well, later on, form part of a new grade from Park Headquarters to Sequoia Lake, a long needed construction.

FIRE PREVENTION

Funds available for the season have been used in completing firebreaks previously roughed out, in felling dangerous snags near the lines, and in clearing and regrading the remaining lengths of wide trails which are generally so located as to be of great value for this purpose, as well as for future use in the general trail scheme of the park. Totals of 5.2 miles old roads, 3.2 miles old trails, and 4.1 miles of wide firebreaks now form the lines of defense from fire hazard, supplemented, of course, by the main travelled roads and trails of the park.

WILD LIFE

Owing to late and heavy spring showers and consequent distribution of water throughout the park, deer, though numerous and tame, are not seen in such numbers as formerly in the vicinity of Headquarters and the Lodge. No predatory animals, excepting weasels, have bothered park animals. No lion tracks reported. Bears reported to be using garbage platform at incinerator somewhat, but not visible to visitors as yet.